

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

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The Power of Youth!

Young people who are empowered to make a difference.

Although 4-H was founded to help young people in agriculture and home economics, it has broadened to become an avenue for entrepreneurship, community service, technology education, and career experiences. The nation's land-grant universities and USDA collaborate with communities, schools, and industry to offer programs that empower America's youth to become contributing members of their communities.

Payoff

- **Business minded.** **Nebraska** Extension's 4-H Business Sense program has taught business skills to more than 600 youths. One participant used her skills to start an Internet business that buys and sells antique tractors and earned between \$500 and \$1,000 each on the sales. **South Carolina State's** Entrepreneurship Expo attracted more than 200 high school seniors interested in starting a business. High schools statewide competed in the business plan competition for an all-expense-paid trip to the New York Stock Exchange. **Prairie View A&M's** Texas Teens Exploring Entrepreneurial Minds teaches middle school students basic business and money management skills. From 117 students in the project, 35 groups started a business and generated about \$5,000 in revenue. Operating a business helped improve the students' math, reading, and writing skills. **Kentucky State** started Students in Free Enterprise, which helps participants apply classroom experiences in the real world. The program helps build student leadership, teamwork, and communication skills through learning, practicing, and teaching principles of free enterprise in after-school programs.
- **Technology wizard.** **Oregon State** Extension introduced the 4-H Tech Wizards program to reduce the high school dropout rate among the state's Latinos. Tech Wizards learn computer skills, Web page design, digital videography, and geospatial technologies with an emphasis on higher education and career awareness. Thirty-six community partners like Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Intel gave more than \$800,000 to support the program. Extension has trained 500 K-12 students and 90 percent of the kids who completed the program improved their grades. All graduated from high school. Students used their skills to map safe walk zones for elementary students,

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gather geographic information systems data to map trails at a wetlands preserve, and teach others about computer technologies. **Nebraska's** 4-H Tech Team program teaches technology skills to rural youths who then use them to help their community. For example, one participant organized an Internet class for senior citizens.

- **Children at risk.** **West Virginia** Extension used the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk program to improve literacy, build resiliency, and strengthen the human capacity to reduce poverty. CYFAR, in collaboration with Troll Book Fairs, donated \$4,000 in books to low-income children. Each child was able to take \$60 worth of new books home. In **Georgia**, the CYFAR program provided after-school tutoring and enrichment activities to 50 at-risk fourth and fifth graders. Of the participants, 86 percent improved their reading grade equivalency and 78 percent increased their math grade equivalency. Similar programs are offered by Extension in **Hawaii, New Hampshire**, and several other states.
- **Positive character.** Land-grant universities help at-risk youths overcome violence, peer pressure, and negative behaviors by teaching them trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, and citizenship through Character Counts! **Arizona** Extension collaborates with the Ft. Huachuca U.S. Army base to offer Character Counts! training to about 200 elementary and middle school students. The program has improved children's behavior, which reduced classroom disruptions. To help address problems of lying, cheating and bullying, **Louisiana** Extension started using Character Counts! Teachers and parents were excited about the program's success. **South Dakota State** Extension offers We Are All Relatives, a spinoff of Character Counts! It teaches students in grades K-12 about Native American heritage and the differences and similarities among cultures. **Colorado State** Extension used Character Counts! to teach K-12 students in Logan County team building, respect, trust, cooperation, and citizenship. The students increased their knowledge of character traits by 72 percent.

- **Choose health.** Prevention is the first step in getting youths to say no to tobacco and alcohol. Each day in the United States, approximately 4,400 youths aged 12-17 try their first cigarette. In Delaware, an estimated 2,200 youths start smoking each year, and the state has the nation's highest rate of alcohol-related accidents.

Delaware Extension offers Health Rocks, a national 4-H program that teaches youths to resist peer pressure, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and make better decisions. Statewide, nearly 2,300 students in 91 schools have learned about the health affects of tobacco and alcohol use. Participants say the program helped improve their problem-solving and decision-making skills.

- **Distant diagnosis.** **Georgia** Extension used digital distance diagnostics in a science education effort that linked a Georgia county and Honduras. Through the Web-based system for diagnosing crop problems, the program exposed 75 students to the cutting-edge agricultural technology and provided agricultural exchange.

- **Getting the job.** **Alabama** Extension's Groundhog Job Shadow Day paired 900 middle and high school students with 51 mentors to expose them to career opportunities. Students and adults also have access to a multistate online job search engine. The mentors said they were impressed with the students' knowledge of job responsibilities, and 25 percent of the participants obtained summer jobs.



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